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STATE REPRESENTATIVE ♦ 42ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Public Hearing
C. Corrections and the Courts
Thursday, January 07, 2010
10:00am, Rm. 225 NW

Testimony – AB 633 ***County Jail Funds***

Chairperson Parisi and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf of Assembly Bill 633, which would allow counties to use county jail funds for costs related to providing educational and medical services to county jail inmates.

Currently, with certain exceptions (i.e. Non-moving violations: parking tickets, seatbelt violations, smoking ordinances), if a person is required to pay a fine or forfeiture for violation of a state law or municipal or county ordinance, the person also pays a jail surcharge of 1 percent of the fine or \$10, whichever is greater. If multiple offenses are involved, the person pays the surcharge on each fine or forfeiture involved. These monies collected go into a county jail fund. Out of this county jail fund, counties may make payments for construction, remodeling, repair, or improvements on county jails.

Last year, Senator Olsen was approached by the Administrative Coordinator of Waushara County, Deb Behringer. Recently there was a new jail built in Waushara County, and Deb mentioned that there would be no need for improvements to the jail in the near future. She thought it would be helpful if counties could use this county jail fund for additional costs and payments other than the specific physical improvements to county jails allocated in the statutes.

Senator Olsen and I believe this is a good idea. Allowing the use of county jail funds for costs related to providing educational and medical services would ease budgetary pressures on county governments that are already facing tough budget cuts by granting them access to funds that might be currently unused. In these tough economic times, it is important that every dollar is used in the most efficient way possible. This bill will help county governments reach this goal by giving them increased flexibility in allocating

funding for educational and medical services that are most need in each specific county jail.

Senator Olsen and I have also been told by a number of our county administrators that inmate medical and educational services are a significant portion of county jail expenses. These administrators felt that any help in covering these expenses would be beneficial to controlling their budgets while also preserving these important medical and educational services.

The county administrators from both Marquette and Waupaca were two of the other counties supportive of this bill, and Waukesha County has also registered in favor.

Marquette County

Brent Miller- Administrative Coordinator

- Approximately \$25,000 per year is collected in the county jail fund. (This is not the total balance because the dollars in the fund rolls over.)
- County spends almost \$57,000 per year for inmate medical expenses
- Thinks that it would be extremely beneficial to use some the jail assessment to help these medical expenses.

Waupaca County

Mary Robbins- Administrative Coordinator

- Approximately \$58,000 per year is collected in the county jail fund.
- Had \$12,000 originally budgeted for educational services to inmates that was cut from the 2010 budget because of their shortfall.
- Just built a new jail so they don't use very much out of this fund per year.

Again, I would like to thank the Committee for your consideration of this bill. If members of the committee have any questions about this legislation, please feel free to either ask me now or you may, of course, contact mine or Senator Olsen's office.